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Soviet Nuke Weapons On Cuba

By Cliff Kincaid

A secret report being circulated by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) indicates that the Soviets may be constructing nuclear capable weapons on the communist island of Cuba, the Daily Oklahoman reported on May 25.

The newspaper said the Defense Department and the DIA have discounted the report, which is based on information supplied by a Cuban defector. But a CIA report obtained by the Oklahoman maintains that "the report is credible and that recent Soviet military activity in Cuba, including the reported missile modifications, is designed to give Soviet forces there a nuclear strike capability that could pose the greatest threat to U.S. security since 1962," the time of the Cuban missile crisis, the newspaper said.

The defector has said that he was being trained to command a missile site where modified versions of the SA-2 missile (the Sam) are being stationed. "The (DIA) report says the defector told military intelligence analysts he was told during his training that the modified missiles could carry two warheads which were 'stated to be immensely powerful and requiring Soviet personnel to activate them,'" the paper reported. The defector assumed the warheads on the modified missiles were nuclear, but the words "atomic" and "nuclear" were never used, the DIA report said.

The analysis by the CIA, however, has pointed out that, "What the Cuban defector did not know is that the Soviets tested nuclear warheads of nine and 25 kilotons on the SA-2 back in the early 1960s and that most SA-2s in the Soviet Union are nuclear capable. Nor did he know that the Soviets routinely train their troops who handle nuclear weapons but who are not 'cleared' by telling them that the weapons are 'immensely powerful,' never telling them that the 'immensely powerful' weapons are nuclear."

The author of the CIA report made available to the Oklahoman stated that the intelligence agencies, including the CIA, are under pressure not to report the existence of a nuclear capability in Cuba. He said that a recent intelligence estimate prepared by

the agency omitted a key function assigned to the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba the guarding of nuclear facilities. Political pressure by CIA Director Stansfield Turner, an appointee of President Carter, was responsible for the omission, he indicated. He added: "The U.S. intelligence community cannot conclude that there are nuclear weapons in Cuba without causing international crisis. Thus, a blind eye is cast to the massive amount of contrary data being amassed by the intelligence gatherers of the federal government." Such data, as reported by the Oklahoman, consist of the following:

(1) Soviet storage facilities, similar to those used in Eastern Europe to house nuclear weapons and materials, have been constructed near Cienfuegos.

(2) MiG 23 aircraft, which can be easily modified to carry nuclear weapons, have been transferred to 50 hardened shelters which can shield them from aerial surveillance.

(3) Two runways in Cuba have been lengthened to permit landings by the Soviet Backfire bomber, a nuclear attack aircraft.

(4) Construction of what appears to be underground bunkers or silos south of Havana. "Such missile site construction has never been used for SA-2 missiles," the Oklahoman reported.

The modification of the SA-2 Missiles designed to give them a range of 21.7 miles with a 419-pound explosive warhead, will likely precede the stationing of longer-range SS-20 missiles on the island, the CIA analyst said. Such modification, he said, "is precisely what the Soviets would do if they later wish to introduce larger nuclear weapons in Cuba - weapons with a strike capability in the United States beyond Miami and its environs."

Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, states that the report that the Soviets are equipping their ground-to-air missiles in Cuba with nuclear warheads are not at all surprising, although he has not been privy to classified information about this. Gen. Graham said that the U.S. had considered making such an adaptation with our ground-to-air missiles several years ago. He said it was perfectly feasible technically, and it gave important added flexibility to the missiles.